

In addition, the United States and other concerned countries are promoting a comprehensive strategy to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. This includes the ABC approach—encouraging abstinence, being faithful, and using condoms, with abstinence as the only sure way to avoid the sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS.

As we work to fight HIV/AIDS globally, we must also ensure our citizens at home have the resources and support they need for treatment and prevention of this disease. Today, more than 1 million Americans are living with HIV/AIDS, and many of these individuals are unaware that they are infected. We will continue to provide medical care, counseling, and testing for those in greatest need of HIV/AIDS assistance, and I have asked the Congress to reform and reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act and provide new funding to improve distribution of HIV/AIDS medicines in America. The Federal Government is also working closely with faith-based and other community organizations to provide services to individuals with HIV/AIDS and end the stigma of AIDS.

America is blessed with scientific knowledge and compassionate citizens, and we are guided by our founding conviction that each life has matchless value. On World AIDS Day and throughout the year, we stand with our friends and partners around the world in the urgent struggle to fight this virus, comfort those who are affected, and save lives.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 1, 2006, as World AIDS Day. I urge the Governors of the States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, officials of the other territories subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people to join me in appropriate activities to remember those who have lost their lives to AIDS, to work to prevent this deadly disease, and to comfort and support those living with HIV/AIDS.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and

of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:44 a.m., December 1, 2006]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 4, 2006. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Locality Pay Increases Payable to Civilian Federal Employees

November 30, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for locality pay increases payable to civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems in January 2007.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS and certain other pay systems would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2007: (1) a 1.7 percent across-the-board adjustment in scheduled rates of basic pay derived from Employment Cost Index data on changes in the wages and salaries of private industry workers, and (2) a 6.9 percent locality pay adjustment based on Bureau of Labor Statistics' salary surveys of non-Federal employers in each locality pay area. According to the statutory formula, for Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 8.6 percent. The total Federal employee pay increase would cost about \$8.8 billion in fiscal year 2007 alone.

Title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative locality pay plan if I view the adjustment that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." For the reasons described below, I have determined that it would be appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority to set an alternative January 2007 locality pay increase.

A national emergency, within the meaning of chapter 53 of title 5, has existed since September 11, 2001, that includes Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The growth in Federal requirements is straining the Federal budget. Full statutory civilian pay increases costing \$8.8 billion in 2007 alone would interfere with our Nation's ability to pursue the war on terrorism.

Such cost increases would threaten our efforts against terrorism or force deep cuts in discretionary spending or Federal employment to stay within budget. Neither outcome is acceptable. Therefore, I have determined that a locality pay increase of 0.5 percent would be appropriate for GS and certain other employees in January 2007. Our national situation precludes granting larger locality pay increases at this time.

Accordingly, I have determined that under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, locality-based comparability payments for the locality pay areas in amounts set forth in the attached table shall become effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2007. When compared with the payments currently in effect, these comparability payments will increase the General Schedule payroll by 0.5 percent.

Finally, the law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal workforce. To the contrary, since any pay raise above what I have proposed would likely be unfunded, agencies would have to absorb the additional cost and could have to freeze hiring in order to pay the higher rates. Moreover, GS "quit" rates continue to be very low (2.0 percent on an annual basis), well below the overall average "quit" rate in private enterprise. Should the need arise, the Government has many compensation tools, such as recruitment bonuses, retention allowances, and special salary rates, to maintain the high quality workforce that serves our Nation so very well.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks on World AIDS Day

December 1, 2006

Laura and I welcome our guests—this is World AIDS Day. It's a day for the world to recognize the fact that there are 39 million people living with HIV/AIDS and a day to remember the fact that 25 million people have died of AIDS. It's a day, as well, for the United States to remember that we have a duty to do something about this epidemic, this pandemic.

And today Laura and I met with the Secretary of HHS, as well as Mark Dybul, our U.S. Coordinator for our AIDS effort, and people who are involved with helping to save lives, people from our country and people from around the world who have come to share with us the stories of compassion and courage.

This country is committed—we're committed in helping solve this problem by dedicating a lot of resources to the battle against HIV/AIDS. The American taxpayers have funded over \$15 billion to help groups around this table save lives. Before the PEPFAR program—that's the name of the program that we—that's what we call the program that we dedicate money to, to help save lives—before it became into being, there was about 50,000 people receiving life-saving drugs. Today, there are over 800,000 people receiving lifesaving drugs, and we thank those who are on the ground in the countries around the world who are using taxpayers' money to save lives. We believe that it's one thing to spend money; we also believe it's another thing to say that we expect there to be results. And the American people need to know, we're getting good results with your money, and we'll continue to spend it wisely.

We also—as we think about people affected with HIV/AIDS in countries around the world, we remember those who have got HIV/AIDS here at home. And it's very important for the American people to understand we're spending over \$18 billion to help save lives here at home. And I call upon the